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# ABRAHAM LINCOLN AS A STRATEGIST.

## PART I.

BY ARCHIBALD FORBES.

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IN AN unique variety of directions the great Civil War evoked the ready, versatile aptitude of the American citizen ; in none more remarkably than with regard to the superior military commands. By the defection of the great majority of the senior officers of the regular army, the North was left almost entirely denuded of available professional soldiers in the higher grades conversant with commands or experienced in war in the superior capacities. In the modern armies of the old world, high commands were then, as they still are, restricted to officers of long graduated military experience following on a technical professional education. Thanks to the comprehensive and thorough training of West Point, the officerhood of the army of the United States possessed a professional training of unequalled theoretical and practical efficiency and range. The seniors who went South carried with them in the nature of things the greater proportion of higher professional experience ; but by reason of the national idiosyncrasy combined with the justifiable self-confidence imparted by the West Point training, the comparative lack of experience in superior positions had singularly little if any adverse influence. There are two kinds of experience—the experience of routine, and the experience of initiative, resource, and decision. It was experience of the latter type which the Northern captains and majors, promoted by leaps and bounds to high commands, matched and assimilated with their West Point teachings in their swift advance ; and a couple of campaigns made them truer veterans in the soldierly sense of the word than any amount of unwarlike longevity could have done.

But the national aptitude was exemplified yet more saliently in the rapid yet thoroughly justified rise to high commands of men whom the outbreak of the war found innocent, or all but innocent, of any military training or experience. Sickles's first commission was signed in June, 1861, but he was a corps-commander at Chancellorsville, and it was with the intuition of a true tactician that at Gettysburg he was resolute to place his corps in that Peach Orchard position, his tenure of which balked Lee's desire to occupy it to advantage with his artillery and Longstreet's infantry. He left a limb there, but none of his alert versatility; when last I saw him he was vigorously indoctrinating Castelar and Figueras into the methods of "running" the newborn and short-lived Spanish republic. Blair was a civilian politician until the outbreak of the war, but he commanded the Eighteenth Corps with credit in Sherman's Atlanta campaign. Logan, it is true, had served as a volunteer in Mexico, but that service was a mere incident in the civilian career which was interrupted by the Civil War, throughout which he fought with great distinction and, in Sherman's phrase, "nobly sustained his reputation" in the command of the Army of the Tennessee before Atlanta after the fall of the lamented McPherson.

Yet another strange military phenomenon did this war present. The chief of staff of all men in an army is the man on whom devolves the most arduous, wide-ranging, technical, and responsible duties; his professional knowledge is expected to be all but universal, his experience profound, his military judgment prompt and ripe. Among famous chiefs of staff have been Gneisenau, Berthier, Soult, Jomini, Mansfield, Moltke, Voghts-Retz, Blumenthal, Stiele, all educated and trained soldiers, conversant, practically and theoretically, with the art of war. Among the chiefs of staff in the Union armies Humphreys and Webb were educated soldiers of exceptional professional ability; Marcy, of the domestic, if not nepotic, type of chief of staff, was at all events a graduate of West Point and had seen frontier service. But Rawlins, Garfield, and Butterfield were destitute of any military education or training, having been pure civilians until the beginning of the war. Such experience as they possessed had come to them in the rough-and-ready school of active warfare, yet each filled the exceptionally onerous part of chief of staff to a great army in the field, and against none of those

quasi-extempore specialists has the most censorious critic adventured a charge of inefficiency.

That phase of aptitude for the art military which is capable of developing itself in true and far-seeing conception of strategical considerations of the higher order, is an attribute of singular rarity. It is intuitive; the possessor of it may live and die unaware of the endowment, unless circumstances occur which evoke its exercise. No assiduity of study or practice will earn it in its fullest for the man whom nature has not gifted, while it may reveal itself almost by surprise in one who is unaware that Clausewitz and Hamley have written a line, and who has never witnessed the setting of a squadron in the field. The warrior illuminated with this spark of natural genius is the great commander of his age—he is an Alexander, a Cæsar, a Frederick, a Napoleon. In the civilian possessor it may lie wholly obscured and dormant; while, again, it has irradiated and inspired a Rienzi, a Luther, a Loyola. Ready-witted, many-sided, zealous and ardent as were the soldiers of the Union alike professional and volunteer, it cannot be maintained that in the early days of the Civil War any one of them gave manifestation that heaven had endowed him with the gift of a strategic genius. But the attribute was present in the rich mental equipment of the great civilian whom the wisdom of Providence placed at the head of the State in that time of trouble. It is the object of the present writer to elucidate the fact that Abraham Lincoln was gifted with the faculty of intuitive strategic perception in a degree which, by reason of the multiplicity of other eminent qualities which adorned the character of that illustrious man, has not received adequate recognition at the hands of his countrymen. It is with natural diffidence that a foreigner ventures to undertake this task; but the doing of it has been long on his mind, and a well-intentioned effort cannot be taken as an impertinence.

It is quite improbable that his experience as a captain of mounted volunteers in the Black Hawk War should have awakened in Lincoln any consciousness of his possession of strategic aptitude. His biographers\* tell us that during McClellan's illness in December, 1861, the President "gave himself night and day to the study of the military situation. He read a large number of strategical works. He held long conferences with

\* Nicolay and Hay, Vol. 5, p. 155.

eminent generals and admirals, and astonished them by his special knowledge and the keen intelligence of his questions." But five months earlier, in the midst of the dismay and the disorganization resulting from the *débâcle* of Bull Run, without the benefit of the study of "strategical works," and independently of the counsels of "eminent generals and admirals," Lincoln had composed a memorandum defining the military policy and measures which in his judgment were the lessons of the reverse just incurred. The whole of this document, wise and far-seeing as were its terms, need not be quoted. Its various clauses enjoin refrainment for the time from offensive operations, the maintenance of the existing positions, and the sedulous organization of the new levies into methodized and disciplined armies. Those matters specified, the President set down the following pregnant injunction :

"When the foregoing shall have been substantially attended to: Let Manassas Junction (or some point on one or other of the railroads near it) and Strasburg be seized and permanently held, with an open line from Washington to Manassas, and an open line from Harper's Ferry to Strasburg—the military men to find the way of doing these things."

If Lincoln had never written another sentence, these lines would evince his possession of an accurate mental *coup d'œil*, and an instinctive discernment of strategic points of profound importance at once in a military and a political sense. What was the obvious military policy of the North? Of course its dominant purpose was to put down the rebellion. But as regarded the line of the Potomac there were peculiar conditions, some natural, some artificial, indeed, but none the less stringent, which interposed themselves to the complication of the main problem.

The National Capital stood on the very outer edge of Union territory. The Shenandoah Valley was for the South a protected avenue leading northward into the rear of Washington and straight towards the heart of the most fertile provinces of the Union. The conviction of many wise Southerners may have been right—and that conviction has been warmly supported by Colonel Chesney—that invasions of Northern territory by Southern armies were deplorable mistakes; and that, quite apart from military results, it was throwing away a great political advantage to reduce what should have been a purely defensive struggle for rights to the lower level of aggressive fighting for retaliation and mastery. Be

this as it may, it would appear unquestionable that the primary duty of the North, a duty coming in front of that ulterior duty of reducing the South to submission, was to take measures for securing its own soil from outrage, and its capital from insult. In a war between hostile nations invasion is reckoned a triumph for the invader and a humiliation to the invaded ; how much more cogent are those ascriptions in such a contest as that which the North was waging against the South ? Nor, indeed, to the former were the sentimental humiliation and the injuries inflicted on the population of the territory overrun all the despoil and damage that invasion by the latter might involve ; on the invading bayonets until the catastrophe of Gettysburg there hovered the contingency of the recognition of the South by the European powers.

Such considerations, when Johnston's foreposts were within sight of the Capitol, and when McDowell's raw levies had degenerated into a mob, must have been vitally present in Lincoln's mind when he wrote the injunction which is quoted above. Before the strong man armed should go forth again to the battle, he would take precautions for the keeping of his own house. The President's directions in this regard betoken a singular insight. Had he been a practical soldier he would probably have specified the occupation of an intermediate strategic point in front of Salem at the apex of the salient bend made by the Manassas Gap Railroad, to divide the long interval between the positions at Manassas and at Strasburg ; and perhaps rather than in the latter vicinity he would have located the position in the Shenandoah Valley somewhere about midway between Strasburg and Cedarville, so as to cover the Manassas and Chester gaps and the Luray road down the Massanutten Valley, as well as the great pike traversing the main valley.

It is not too much to say that those three positions, strongly fortified and adequately armed for permanent occupation, capable each of holding 10,000 to 15,000 men, would have protected Union territory from invasion from the lower Potomac on the east to the North Mountains range on the west, and would have mitigated if not dispelled the chronic anxiety for the protection of the National Capital, which for years clogged the enterprise of the Northern forces in the eastern section of the theatre of war. Had those fortress camps been created, strong for defence and possessing important potentialities of offence, one or other of

them would have been in the path of a hostile army moving upon Washington by whatever line of advance, since that army neither could have afforded to mask the obstacle, nor could have passed it unregarded, leaving its own communications in peril. Consider what those positions would have affected, averted, obstructed. The pestilent guerillas of Loudoun and Fauquier would have been cowed. The rich region of the lower Shenandoah would have been alienated from Confederate uses and its produce been at the service of the North. In face of the barrier which the Strasburg position would have presented, Jackson's campaign of May-June, 1862, the prescribed scheme of which was "to press the enemy at Harper's Ferry, threaten invasion into Maryland, and an attempt on Washington, and thus make the most energetic diversion possible," could not have been prosecuted, and probably would never have been enjoined; McDowell would have joined the Army of the Potomac, and the Peninsular campaign might have had another issue.

Had there been entrenched positions at Salem and Manassas there would have been no second Bull Run, since neither Jackson nor Longstreet would have ventured through Thoroughfare Gap, having the Salem position on flank and in rear, and since the Manassas position would have covered Pope's depot of supplies and have afforded his army a protective gathering-point, to assail which would have been rash, and to turn which would have been reckless. Had there been no second Bull Run Lee would not have adventured his Maryland campaign. But, even assuming Pope to have been crushed, if the positions indicated by Lincoln had existed Lee would assuredly have thought twice before moving into Maryland, leaving them in his rear on his lines of communication. Long admits that the unexpected discovery of a garrison in Harper's Ferry paralyzed the execution of his chief's ulterior designs pending the reduction of that place, which fell by a *coup de main*. These designs Lee would scarcely have entertained in the full knowledge of the potential influence of those positions which he must have possessed had they existed—places too strong to be attempted by a *coup de main*. He would have found them formidable if not insurmountable obstacles to the prosecution of the campaign in Pennsylvania to which he directed himself after the victory of Chancellorsville. During his great opponent's long-drawn-out movement athwart Virginia, Hooker could find or

make no opportunity for acting on Lincoln's quaintly-put suggestion: "If the head of Lee's army is at Martinsburg and the tail of it at Fredericksburg, the animal must be very slim somewhere. Could you not break him?" Pleasanton, indeed, claimed to have enforced on Lee the valley route to the Potomac instead of that to the eastward of the Blue Ridge. But on either line Lee would have found one of the fortress camps enjoined by Lincoln in his memorandum of June 1861, had effect been given to its requirement. From either or from both positions the "animal" in its slimness would have run risk of damage, although scarcely that of severance; they would have been too strong to be taken without regular approaches and siege artillery, one or other of them would have threatened Lee's communications whatever line they could have followed, and he must have left a division to observe the menacing one, a weakening of force he could ill afford.

Finally, there can be little question that if there had been a strongly entrenched position in the vicinity of Strasburg, Early, in the summer of 1864, would never have seen the lower valley, far less have fought on the Monocacy and fluttered the Volscians of the Washingtonian Corioli. For in that case Hunter, withdrawing from his stroke at Lynchburg, would have made shift to retire on that position down the valley instead of diverging as he did into the Kanawha region, in default of support short of the Potomac.

None of those entrenched positions was ever constructed. In no case was there any material hindrance. For the work to be done east of Manassas Gap there was available the interval between Johnston's withdrawal from before Washington in March and Pope's retreat in the end of August, 1862. Throughout the winter of 1861-62 Jackson never had more than 4,000 men in the Shenandoah Valley, and if during that time Johnston's presence at Manassas had contributed to deter from construction work in the Strasburg vicinity, the interval between Jackson's retirement after Kernstown and his re-descent on Banks more than a month later, would have sufficed for the work. Why the President's injunction was not impetrated, I know not; nor does its non-fulfilment in any degree affect the argument for Lincoln's strategic discernment based upon its terms.

It cannot be denied that McClellan, notwithstanding the de-



fects of his military idiosyncrasy, was a scientific officer of exceptional capacity. There is no evidence whether or not he knew of Lincoln's memorandum, but the following extract from that melancholy publication, "McClellan's Own Story," is a remarkable tribute, conscious or unconscious, to the President's strategic prescience as illustrated in the memorandum quoted above :

"The instructions I gave (before leaving for the Peninsula) were to the effect that Manassas Junction should be strongly entrenched . . . . and that General Banks should put the mass of his force there . . . . ; the railroad from Washington to Manassas, and thence to Strasburg, to be at once put in running order, and protected by blockhouses . . . . a force to be strongly entrenched at or near the point where the railroad crosses the Shenandoah, Chester Gap to be also occupied by a detachment well entrenched. . . . Under the arrangement the immediate approaches to Washington would be covered by a strong force well entrenched and able to fall back on the city if overpowered ; while if the enemy advanced down the Shenandoah the force entrenched at Strasburg would be able to hold him in check until assistance could reach it by rail from Manassas. If these measures had been carried into effect Jackson's subsequent advance down the Shenandoah would have been impracticable . . . . and, again, with Manassas entrenched as I directed, Pope would have had a secure base of operations from which to manœuvre, and the result of his campaign might have been very different."

One paragraph of Lincoln's memorandum written immediately after the Bull Run disaster has been quoted and its strategic potentialities elucidated. There followed it another paragraph which, as strengthening the argument for the President's possession of instinctive strategic perception, is not less worthy of notice. It runs thus : "This done,"—viz., the things enjoined in a previous paragraph—"a joint movement from Cairo on Memphis ; and from Cincinnati on East Tennessee."

Commodore Davis occupied Memphis within a year after this sentence was penned ; but it was not until fifteen months later that Burnside marched into Knoxville, and the staunch loyalists of East Tennessee had to suffer and endure for several months longer before they were able to call themselves once more entirely free. Yet before the blood of the first pitched battle of the war was dry the President was illustrating by the precept just quoted his full and anxious consciousness, not less of the strategic than of the political importance of the occupation of East Tennessee by the Union arms ; for the hill country of East Tennessee, with the northwestern section of North Carolina, was a re-entering wedge

of loyal unionism penetrating the vitals of the Confederacy. It was traversed by the railway line which constituted the main link of connection between the eastern and the western and southwestern railroad systems of the rebel power—a line the dislocation of which would entail on that power the most serious mischief. “A glance at the map,” write Lincoln’s most recent biographers,\* “and a study of attendant circumstances, can leave no doubt that it was entirely possible to have seized and held the mountain region of East Tennessee, and that such an occupation would have been a severance of the rebel Confederacy almost as complete and damaging to its military strength as the opening of the Mississippi.”

In the end of September, 1861, the President followed up his curt precept of July with a more detailed and specific direction. “I wish,” he wrote, “a movement made to seize and hold a point on the railroad connecting Virginia and Tennessee, near the mountain pass called Cumberland Gap.” After an accurate summary of the military situation on either side in and about the region such an advance would traverse, he expresses his intention that it and McClellan’s projected movement in the coast region should be made simultaneously. While preparations were in course, the vigilant defensive was to be maintained. When all should be ready, he directs that Sherman, remaining immobile in his position southward of Louisville, should simply “hold” his adversary, Buckner, “while all [the troops] at Cincinnati and all at Louisville, with all on the line, concentrate rapidly at Lexington, and thence [march] to Thomas’s camp [at Camp Dick Robinson, on the way to Cumberland Gap], joining him, and the whole [move] thence upon the Gap.” Recognizing the existing difficulties of transport, the indefatigable man introduced into his message to Congress, in the beginning of December, 1861, a recommendation, “as a military measure,” of the construction of a strategic railway, from the most advisable point on the existing system, across eastern Kentucky into East Tennessee; an operation which, if carried out, would probably have shortened the war. He inspired McClellan, promoted *per saltum* to the command of the army of the United States, with the zeal for the military occupation of East Tennessee which burned in himself; and that chief kept impressing on Buell, whom he had commissioned to

\*Nicolay and Hay, Vol. V., p. 73.

the service, his conviction that "strategical and political considerations alike render a prompt movement in force on East Tennessee imperative." How Buell, disregarding his commanding officer's strenuous representations and the President's trenchant comment that he "would rather have a point on the railroad south of the Cumberland Gap than Nashville, because it cuts a great artery of the enemy's communication, which Nashville does not,"—how Buell, I repeat, took his own stiff, refractory way—are not those things written in the chronicles of the perturbed period? But that Buell was self-willed and contumacious cannot obscure the recognition of Lincoln's prompt and shrewd perception, and of his anxious prosecution of correct strategical objects and methods having for their result the military and political utilization of the East Tennessee region.

For seven long months, from the disaster of Bull Run until the beginning of March, 1862, the Union underwent a period of grievous humiliation. Within sight of the dome of the National Capitol stood the outposts of a rebel army, whose cannon commanded the lower Potomac, and the mass of which held an entrenched position within a couple of easy marches from the Washington defences. Against this degrading situation, long endured with exemplary patience, the nation and its head at length began to chafe; and in the beginning of December, 1861, Lincoln handed to the military chief whom already he was gradually finding out, a memorandum outlining an operation having for its object the dislodgement of Johnston from his insolent position at Manassas. Its terms, slightly condensed, are as follows (the figures were furnished by McClellan):

"Suppose that 50,000 of the troops southwest of the river (Potomac) move forward and menace the enemy at Centreville. That 21,000, being the remainder of the available force now there move rapidly to the crossing of the Occoquan by the road through Alexandria towards Richmond; there to be joined by the 33,000 men now being the whole movable force from north-east of the river, which, having been landed from the Potomac just below the mouth of the Occoquan, should move by land up the south side [right bank] of that stream to the crossing point indicated [where the two bodies should unite]; and then the whole move together by the road thence, to Brentville and beyond to the [Orange and Alexandria] railroad just south of its crossing at Broad Run, the railroad bridges having been previously destroyed by a cavalry detachment sent forward in advance."

In so far as it concerned "grand strategy"—the correct recognition of the point at which it was imperative to strike—this memoran-

dum is unexceptionable ; in the practical strategic detail which consisted in the effective direction of troops on that decisive point, it is perhaps less happy. The expressed conviction of General McDowell, it is true, cannot be disregarded, that the result of a movement in force on both flanks of the enemy must result in a battle in which the Northern forces would be victorious. Every respect is due to the opinion of that good and honest soldier. But it is unquestionable that the project as outlined involved in full measure the proverbial risks and uncertainties of a combined movement engaged in with raw troops in an unfamiliar country, complicated by unascertained obstacles and imperfect intercommunication, and thus liable to the contingency of failure to accomplish simultaneous coöperation. If, indeed, that simultaneous coöperation came off deftly, then certainly Johnston would have found himself in that disagreeable predicament which German soldiers knew by the term, "*In der taktischen Mitte.*" But if the Northern forces had failed to keep punctual tryst, then, and yet more fully, had he taken the prompt offensive, would Johnston have been in the enjoyment of the beneficent phase of interior lines. Nearly of equal strength as he was to each of the proposed Northern contingents, his opportunities of timely information, his divers alternatives of action, and his possession of an entrenched position from which to sally and into which to retire, seemed to bring it within the bounds of possibility that the rebel general might still have been at Manassas after having sent both of the Federal bodies back to their lines in discomfiture.

After keeping the President's memorandum for some ten days, McClellan returned it with the unceremoniously curt observation: "Information received recently leads me to believe that the enemy could meet us with nearly equal forces ; and I have now my mind actively turned towards another plan of campaign that I do not think at all anticipated by the enemy, nor by many of our own people."

So far as I can discover, this is McClellan's first allusion to the project of a campaign against Richmond from a base on the Chesapeake. There is no hint of such a scheme in his wide-ranging memorandum of August 2 ; its tenor, indeed, is rather to the contrary. So late, indeed, as the end of November he intimated that the "crushing defeat" of the rebel army "at Manassas" was the great object to be accomplished ; and that

the advance upon it "should not be postponed beyond November 25." Lincoln's proposal was simply an echo of the national feeling and anxiety put into definite shape. McClellan was not a fighting general; shall we greatly err in putting forward the suggestion, that, since he began to perceive he would be squarely forced to go against Johnston if he had no other feasible alternative to substitute, he invented the Chesapeake project during those ten days as a plausible evasion of an unpalatable compulsion? But, so it may be replied, *cælum non animam mutant*—McClellan must have laid his account with having some fighting from his Chesapeake base, and was not deterred by this prospect from penetrating to the vicinity of Richmond: what, then, justifies the surmise that it was a repugnance to fighting which deterred him from trying conclusions with Johnston at Manassas? The clear answer to this is that McClellan was just as reluctant to fight in the Peninsula and before Richmond as he was in front of Washington; and this for the same baseless reason. He did not fight Johnston at Manassas because he believed, or affected to believe, that his adversary could oppose 150,000 men to his own 100,000. It was simply the logical sequence that he should not fight when he found himself before Richmond with 100,000 men whom he called 85,000, while in his imagination the adversary standing over against him was 200,000 strong.\*

When one speaks of fighting, it is of course offensive battles, or defensive battles accepted deliberately, not on compulsion but with a strategic object, which are meant. The stubborn and bloody conflicts sustained in front of Richmond by the staunch and gallant Army of the Potomac were all fought on the compulsory defensive, and the discomfiture of that brave host was wholly wrought by its chief's studied declinature of the timely initiative. At no one of those battles was he present in person save during a part of Malvern Hill. If Williamsburg is to be styled an offensive battle, McClellan was miles in the rear until late in the afternoon of the second day's fighting; and when he did arrive, he characteristically proceeded to convert what offensive there had been into the passive defensive, an attitude which naturally resulted in the nocturnal withdrawal of the enemy. The only two offensive battles fought by McClellan he engaged in after he had seen the cards in his adversary's hand,

\* "McClellan's Own Story," p. 392.

There are three types of commander : he who both organizes and fights ; he who can fight but cannot organize ; he who has a superlative gift for organization, but cannot fight. McClellan was a commander of the last type.

The military situation in Washington, in January 1862, was one of extreme tension. The President, who by the constitution was commander in chief of the armed forces of the United States, supported by the voice of the nation and the counsel of wise and disinterested generals, had pronounced for a direct advance from the Washington base. McClellan, on the other hand, who was General in Chief of the army of the United States, was set on a counter project of a movement on Richmond by the lower Chesapeake. Which of these two powers was to prevail ? For the time, at least, it seemed that the head of the State was resolved to assert to the uttermost the courage of his convictions. Of his own unaided instance he issued a "General War Order"—corresponding in effect to the "General Idea" for a campaign with which soldiers are familiar—directing that on a day named (February 22) there should begin a simultaneous general movement of the land and sea forces of the Union against the insurgent forces ; specifying in detail the several commands which should take part in this great operation ; and enacting that all civil and military officers, including the general in chief, were to be "severally held to their strict and full responsibility for prompt execution of this order." The date for action which it specified was probably premature, but apart from this detail, the full significance of this order seems, in a strategic sense, to deserve greater recognition than has ever been accorded to it. To Grant, in his promotion to the command of the Union armies, has been credited the earliest realization of the inadequate results obtained by the disconnected and inharmonious action of the various commands ; and his altered method of a "simultaneous movement all along the line"—his "design to work all parts of the army together, and somewhat towards a common centre"—has always been held, and justly so, an evidence of his genius for "grand strategy." But Lincoln, pure civilian as he was, by his order of January 27, 1862, had anticipated the gifted and practised soldier by more than two years in the appreciation of the advantages of concerted action towards a common purpose.

Following naturally on his "General War Order," there was

issued by the President to General McClellan a "Special War Order"—the "Special Idea" of the soldier—commanding that the Army of the Potomac, after due provision for the safety of Washington, should move out with the object of "seizing and occupying a point on the railroad southwestward of Manassas Junction, the advance to begin on or before February 22." It is to be noted that the risky strategy of the December memorandum was now abandoned in favor of the better policy of undivided forces directed on a truer objective.

These "War Orders" were definite, deliberate, and momentous deliverances, sternly enjoining obedience on all whom they concerned, specifically on the General-in-Chief. Yet three days after the issue of the "Special Order," Lincoln was writing thus to McClellan: "You and I have distinct and different plans for a movement of the Army of the Potomac. . . . If you will give me satisfactory answers to the following questions I shall gladly yield my plan to yours." The questions need not be quoted; in effect they ask in what respects the Chesapeake plan was superior to the Manassas plan. McClellan's reply was voluminous, plausible, and full of ingenious special pleading. Could McClellan have fought as well as he wrote, he would have taken rank among the great commanders.

It seems obvious, however, that the question at issue was not in any possible sense one of alternative or competition between Manassas and the lower Chesapeake, seeing that in the nature of things, not less for the national self-respect than as a military necessity, Johnston had to be conclusively dislodged before the other adventure could be gone upon. It appears extraordinary that neither the President nor the council of war of general officers of the Army of the Potomac convened by McClellan at the President's instance should have given expression to any consciousness of the obligatory character of this sequence of enterprises. It was almost as if in regard to this all-important point the masterfulness of McClellan had hypnotized President and generals into blindness. The majority of the council voted in favor of the Chesapeake project *simpliciter*. Keyes followed suit on condition of the previous reduction of the Confederate batteries commanding the Potomac; no voice among eight concurrents was raised to stipulate for the prior molestation of Johnston. The President, having sacrificed his own convictions and gone counter

to the feeling of the nation, had no reservations in his support of McClellan's plan save that the security of Washington should be insured, and that the Potomac should be freed from the dominance of the rebel batteries. As for McClellan, certainly he had no intention of driving the Confederate army from the vicinity of the National Capital, and so little did he regard the inconvenience and humiliation of the blockade of the Potomac by rebel batteries that it was with great reluctance he made preparations to obey the positive orders for the dislodgement, nor was he ashamed to have the rendezvous at Annapolis of the transport for his projected expedition.

So far as molestation at McClellan's hands was concerned, Johnston's outposts might have watched, or, indeed, hurried, the embarkation of McClellan's final detail. If McClellan's all-but-accomplished attempt had succeeded, to leave Washington garrisoned by a few thousand efficient, the stars and bars might have been seen in Pennsylvania Avenue. In such an event, even on the absurd assumption that Richmond was to the Confederacy what Washington was to the Union, the prompt "swapping of Queens," to use Lee's later phrase, was by no means assured when a half share in the transaction was on McClellan's hands. Had Johnston found Washington too hard a nut to crack, he might nevertheless well have held the attempt worth making; and with his command of railroads, and his knowledge, to quote himself, that "McClellan seems not to value time especially," he might fairly have laid his account with reaching Richmond in advance of that commander after having failed to occupy Washington.

Johnston's withdrawal from Manassas in early March was not, as McClellan and his supporters maintained, because of his discovery of the Chesapeake scheme. In his memoirs the Confederate commander specifically states that his retirement was wholly due to the apprehension that the Federal army was preparing to move through Maryland under cover of the Potomac, and cross the river to the mouth of the Potomac Creek, where it would be at least two days' marches nearer Richmond than was the Army of Northern Virginia on Bull Run. But for this incontrovertible evidence it would be incredible that Johnston should have known nothing of McClellan's plan of campaign until the preparations were all but complete, when it is remembered that Stanton had publicly advertised for transports in the middle of



February, and that the ports of preparation and assemblage were full of Southern sympathizers. The underground telegraph in those early days must have worked badly.

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